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## The Dream Work of Sigmund Freud

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# The Dream Work of Sigmund Freud

John Shannon Hendrix

Sigmund Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, described the dream as being a combination of phonetic and symbolic elements, the mnemonic residue of an auditory perception and the mnemonic residue of a visual perception. The visual mnemonic residue is the “thing presentation” (*Sachvorstellung*, or *Dingvorstellung*), and the auditory mnemonic residue is the “word presentation” (*Wortvorstellung*) in the formation of the dream image, which is described by Freud as the transition from the latent content, the “dream thought,” to the mnemonic residue of the visual image in the *phantasia*, which involves the translation from the intelligible form, *species apprehensibilis*, to the sensible form, *species sensibilis*. As all dream images are connected to underlying dream thoughts for Freud, the mnemonic residue of the sensible form must be more than just the corporeal afterimage of a sensation, but the product of the activity of the *virtus intellectiva* in the formation of the intelligible form. The coexistence of the *Sachvorstellung* and the *Wortvorstellung* in the *Rücksicht auf Darstellbarkeit*, in the writing of the dream, is a “double inscription” (*Niederschrift*) which corresponds to the coexistence of conscious and unconscious images, sensible and intelligible forms. The *Niederschrift* is the quality of the hieroglyph, the simultaneity of the image and the word, thus the *species sensibilis* and the *species apprehensibilis*.

Jacques Lacan divided the psyche into the imaginary, symbolic, and real. The imaginary corresponds to the image-making power (Plotinus) or *Vorstellung* (Hegel), the sensible form and the conscious ego. The symbolic corresponds to the intelligible form, the underlying linguistic matrix of conscious experience, or the unconscious. The real corresponds to the One of Plotinus, that which is fully complete and inaccessible to the imaginary or symbolic. Freud suggested the dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic in his formulation of the perception-consciousness system in *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, *The Ego and the Id*, and *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. That which is accessible to conscious thought in the unconscious is what Freud calls the *preconscious*, that which is capable of becoming conscious. That which becomes conscious, from the *preconscious*, is not sustained in consciousness, but is rather only temporary and fleeting. There is no such thing as a permanent duration of consciousness or conscious thought; it is periodic, undulat-

ing, sporadic. The Freudian unconscious is revealed diachronically in conscious thought, as for Lacan the unconscious is revealed in the gaps in conscious thought.

Conscious thoughts are given to the subject by perception for Freud. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, “the process of something becoming conscious is above all linked with the perceptions which our sense organs receive from the external world.”<sup>1</sup> This is a quality of the imaginary, as occurs in the mirror stage described by Lacan. The consciousness of the infant to itself when it recognizes itself in the mirror is given by perception; consciousness is a construct, as is reason, of perception. But Freud continues, “there is an added complication through which internal processes in the ego may also acquire the quality of consciousness. This is the work of the function of speech, which brings material in the ego into a firm connection with mnemonic residues of visual, but more particularly of auditory, perceptions” (pp. 34–35). From the beginning the ego is seen as being split—there is an ego given by perception in consciousness (rooted in the imaginary, as it were), and an ego given by language, rooted in the symbolic. In consciousness the two egos are indistinguishable, as language is a product of perception, and works in conjunction with perception to actualize consciousness. Consciousness occurs through both thought and perception, and Freud calls the device which distinguishes between the two “reality-testing.” Such a device is intended to distinguish between actual perception and dreams, fantasies and hallucinations, but the distinctions are not always readily apparent.

In *The Ego and the Id*, the ego is defined as the organization of mental processes, and the unconscious is defined as that which is repressed in consciousness. Consciousness is attached to the ego; in the mirror stage it is a necessary basis for the ego, and in the symbolic the ego becomes a necessary basis for consciousness. The difference between the imaginary order and the symbolic order is in the relationship to consciousness; the imaginary is the conscious ego, including that part of the unconscious available in the preconscious, which is brought to the conscious level through perception. The symbolic is the unconscious, which has a linguistic structure, according to Lacan. The symbolic order is that which affects the subject from within language. As the subject develops in language after the mirror stage, unconscious thought becomes dominated by the stimuli of language as opposed to visual stimuli, and the symbolic order becomes indistinguishable from the imaginary order to conscious thought. The unconscious is repressed in the imagi-

nary ego, except as its presence is made known as absence in the gaps in consciousness, and the symbolic is conflated with the imaginary.

The goal of psychoanalysis, according to Freud, is to fill in those gaps in consciousness in order to have access to unconscious processes. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, “we have discovered technical methods of filling up the gaps in the phenomena of our consciousness, and we make use of those methods just as a physicist makes use of experiment. In this manner we infer a number of processes which are in themselves ‘unknowable’ and interpolate them in those that are conscious to us” (p. 83). As for Lacan, the unconscious is inaccessible, and can only be known in absence, in the gaps in consciousness. The gaps in the phenomena of consciousness can be seen as the holes and scotomata of Lacan, “everything that the ego neglects, scotomizes, misconstrues in the sensations that make it react to reality, everything that it ignores, exhausts, and binds in the significations that it receives from language,” as Lacan describes in *Écrits*.<sup>2</sup>

It was Freud’s failure, according to Lacan, that he did not recognize the holes and scotomata in reason itself, in the perception-consciousness system, as it is given by language, as opposed to consciousness alone, given its connection with language and perception. The concept of the unconscious is the same for both Freud and Lacan, though, as that which is unknowable, and revealed in absence, and the science of discovering the principles of the unconscious is the same for Freud as any other science, the subject of which is reality, which “will always remain ‘unknowable’,” but which is reconstructed through scientific hypothesis. As in psychoanalysis, “the yield brought to life in scientific work from our primary sense perceptions will consist in an insight into connections and dependent relations which are present in the external world,” which can be “reliably produced or reflected in the internal world of our thought and a knowledge of which enables us to ‘understand’ something in the external world, to foresee it and possibly to alter it” (*An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 83). As for Lacan, there is a primordial disjunction between reason and that which is perceived, and it is that disjunction which becomes the basis of exploration in Lacanian psychoanalysis, through the methodology of the “science of the letter,” as formulated in the dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic.

The disjunction between reason and that which is perceived is certainly present in the Platonic idea, and is a basic tenet of metaphysics, refined through the psychoanalytic science. For Freud, “the data of conscious self-perception, which alone were at its disposal, have proved in every respect in-

adequate to fathom the profusion and complexity of the processes of the mind, to reveal their interconnections and so to recognize the determinants of their disturbances” (p. 82). Lacan’s project is to widen the framework of conscious self-perception as much as possible, through the study of the functions of language as the mechanism of conscious self-perception itself, thus revealing the limitations of the framework at the same time, and of understanding unconscious processes through those very limitations. Freud continues, “in our science as in the others the problem is the same: behind the attributes (qualities) of the object under examination which are presented directly to our perception, we have to discover something else which is more independent of the particular receptive capacity of our sense organs and which approximates more closely to what may be supposed to be the real state of affairs.”

Lacan’s revision of this position in psychoanalysis, which is based in metaphysical philosophy, is that, despite the disjunction between reason and that which is perceived, which is maintained by Lacan, that “something else” which we discover, independent of sense perception, is equally deceptive, because it is given by conscious reason, which is a product of perception in relation to language, and it is very limited in its ability to approximate a real state of affairs. The real state of affairs in psychoanalysis is found in between reason and reality, in the interaction between the two, and in between perception and consciousness, in which is revealed the possibility of the unconscious. That which is in between perception and consciousness is that which defines and differentiates the imaginary and the symbolic orders.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud differentiated an unconscious idea or thought from a preconscious idea or thought in that the latter is “brought into connection with word-presentations,”<sup>3</sup> that is, language. The word-presentations are described as residues of memories of auditory perceptions. This leads Freud to the conclusion that only a thought which begins as a mnemonic residue of a perception can resurface to consciousness from the preconscious, and that any thought arising from within the unconscious must be transformed into an external perception, through the memory-trace, in order to become conscious. This is very similar to Hegel’s conception of picture-thinking in subjective and objective spirit in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and it is a conception which is determinately overturned by Lacan, in particular in his definition of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other, the symbolic order, and that it is already structured like a language. In Lacan, there is no distinction between thought and language, because the signified

has been shown to be inaccessible to the signifier, except as in absence. I would conclude that in the thought of Lacan there is no concept of “unconscious thought.”

The possibility of unconscious thought is present in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, in the concept of the “floating kingdoms,” where thought is seen as “a vague, uncharted nebula”<sup>4</sup> independent of language, in the *Course in General Linguistics*. Language is seen as giving sound and order to unconscious thought, as language is pictured in its totality as “a series of contiguous subdivisions marked off on both the indefinite plane of jumbled ideas and the equally vague plane of sounds,” which constitute the signified and the signifier, and the intersection of which is described as arbitrary. The “thought-sound” division of language suggests the presence of unconscious thought. There is no such concept of unconscious thought in the linguistics of Noam Chomsky, in the characterization of the deep structure of language as a matrix of rules which determine the syntactical structure of linguistic utterance; such a concept is closer to the Lacanian concept of the linguistic structuring of the unconscious as the discourse of the symbolic, which is itself a matrix of rules. Lacan’s thought is generally seen as being a combination of readings of Freud and structural linguistics; structural linguistics played no overt role in Freud’s psychoanalysis.

Hegel saw perception as “picture-thinking” (*Vorstellung*), which suggests the possibility of unconscious thought, in that images are “thought” by the unconscious prior to conscious perception. The possibility of unconscious thought allows perception to be seen as the medium between the subjective and objective, between the unconscious and language, as for Freud language itself is a residue of perception and it is that by which the unconscious thought becomes language. Picture-thinking preserves the disjunction between reason and perception; if there is unconscious thought, then reason “does not require, as does finite activity, the condition of external materials” (*Phenomenology of Spirit*, 764);<sup>5</sup> reason is seen as self-generating and self-supporting, as in the unconscious thought of Freud, and thus it is only in the *image (Bild)* of reason, which takes objective form in language, through perception, that forms in matter are possible, as in the Platonic *eidos*. The perception of forms in matter is determined by reason made conscious.

For Lacan perception is still a derivative of reason, but the identity of perception and the possibility of an unconscious thought would perpetuate the mirage of consciousness and the structuring of reality by reason, which functions as the symbolic order does in language to repress the unconscious

and maintain the self-certainty of the *cogito*. For metaphysical philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis, the goal is to discover the unconscious, or that which is other to conscious reason, through reason, while the goal of Lacanian psychoanalysis is to discover the unconscious, or that which is other to conscious reason, within conscious reason itself, and a product of that re-framing of the metaphysic is the realization that the possibility of unconscious thought does not exist.

Freud is close to Saussure in concluding from dream analysis that “what becomes conscious in it [visual thinking] is as a rule only the concrete subject-matter of thought, and...the relations between the various elements of this subject-matter, which is what specially characterizes thoughts, can not be given visual expression” (*The Ego and the Id*, p. 14). This corresponds to the underlying nebula of thoughts of Saussure which are only given concrete existence in a direct correspondence with a word in language, in the relation between signified and signifier, and contradicts the concept of the deep structure of language of Chomsky in which it is exactly the “relations between the various elements” which becomes concrete. Freud concludes that “thinking in pictures is, therefore, only a very incomplete form of becoming conscious,” because mnemonic images, whether in language or dream memories, cannot correspond completely to the underlying structures in the unconscious from which they are derived, because of the possibility of unconscious thought. Lacan would argue the opposite, that becoming conscious is only a very incomplete form of picture-thinking, because mnemonic images are a product of the unconscious *imago*, which are manifest in consciousness as forms, by which they are disjoined from the imaginary order.

Freud saw language as that which transforms unconscious thought into perception. “The part played by word-presentations now becomes perfectly clear. By their interposition internal thought-processes are made into perceptions” (p. 16). The mirror stage of Lacan shows that there are no internal thought-processes prior to perception, that perception is the result of the intersection of language and imaginary image identification, and that the thought-processes of the imaginary are then retroactively created by the intersection of language and perception. While for Freud, in the hypercathexis of the process of thinking, thoughts are perceived “as if they came from without,” for Lacan thoughts are perceived as if they come from within. Freud defined ego as a product of perception, while for Lacan the imaginary precedes perception.

The distinction between the imaginary and symbolic described by Lacan, and the preservation of the imaginary in the symbolic, is played out in the dream work described by Sigmund Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, *On Dreams*, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, and *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*. The dream is not the unconscious, as both Freud and Lacan maintain, although it is seen to reveal the structures of the unconscious, and from the outset Freud's analysis is of the *memory* of the dream rather than the dream itself; the dream is thus seen as a mnemonic residue of perception. The content of the memory of the dream is labeled the manifest content of the dream, and the product of the conceptual analysis of the dream is labeled the latent content, or dream thought, of the dream. The latent content of the dream is not a content of the memory of the dream itself, but something which is ascribed to it by conscious thought. Dream work is the process which transforms the supposed latent content of the dream into the manifest content, the process by which the dream is generated as imagined by Freud in the supposition that it is generated from unconscious thought, or, as would be the case for Lacan, the discourse of the Other. The structures of both unconscious thought and symbolic discourse contain particular linguistic constructions, as both are languages, the relations of which can be found in the relations between images in the manifest content of the dream. Lacan does not pursue dream analysis in psychoanalysis, but he adopts many of Freud's linguistic analogies from dream analysis in conceiving of the relation between the imaginary and symbolic.

Freud saw a direct relationship between the dream thought and the dream content in the same way as there is a direct relationship between the signifier and the signified in the structural linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, as two sides of a piece of paper, more or less, and the transcription between the two is governed by a linguistic syntax, a complex system of rules which operates according to a logic which does not always correspond to conscious reason. The mechanisms of representation, as they are developed between the dream thought and the dream image, are different from conscious mechanisms of representation in the intersection of perception and language, although the mnemonic residues of dream memories are derived from those of external perception, and the linguistic mechanisms of representation in the unconscious are derived from conscious language. Unconscious mechanisms are seen as a variation of conscious mechanisms not under the control of conscious reason; in that way they can be seen in the Lacanian sense as a discourse of the Other, the mechanisms of the symbolic transposed into a deep structure, in-



tersecting with the mechanisms of the imaginary in the identification between the subject and the dream image.

As is often said, the ego is always present in the dream, the insertion of the perceiving subject into the unconscious mechanisms of language and perception. Such a relationship becomes problematic in Lacanian psychoanalysis, in the quadrature of the subject, in the attempt to show the elision of the subject in signification, which requires a distinction between the symbolic order and the imaginary order, a distinction which does not exist in dream work, because of the immediate identification between thought and image, signifier and signified, as in Saussurean linguistics, which is subverted by Lacan in the resistance of the signifier to the signified in conscious discourse, in the discourse of the Other. Thus for Lacan the unconscious cannot be anything other than the discourse of the Other, and a theory of dream analysis is not formulated outside of conscious experience. If it were it would be nothing other than a repetition of conscious experience and constructs.

Dream thoughts and dream content are for Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “two versions of the same subject-matter” presented in two different languages in a kind of transcript “whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation.”<sup>6</sup> Dream content is seen as a “pictographic script, the characters of which have to be transposed individually into the language of dream thoughts” in a signifying relation. Relations between dream images depend on relations between dream thoughts as a kind of deep structure syntactical matrix. There is no direct relationship between sequences of images in dreams and thought processes in the dream thoughts, which leads Freud to a conclusion which would suggest that there is no unconscious thought per se, but only mimetic repetitions and reproductions of thoughts which correspond to mimetic reproductions of images in perception, the mnemonic residues. The unconscious doesn’t think in a way corresponding to conscious reason; it is as a monkey, as a sort of primordial form of conscious reason, imitating actions which are products of linguistic concepts, but whose actions are not connected to any linguistic concepts of its own.

The mechanism of the transposition from dream thoughts to dream images is labeled “imagination,” and the “mental activity which may be described as ‘imagination’” is “liberated from the domination of reason and from any moderating control” (p. 116). Dream imagination “makes use of recent waking memories for its building material,” in mimesis and repetition, and “it erects them into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to those of

waking life.” A Lacanian revision of Freud would suggest that the structures of dream images, if they can be seen as structures, are not erected by dream thoughts, but rather transposed. Dream imagination is “without the power of conceptual speech” and has “no concepts to exercise an attenuating influence,” thus being “obliged to paint what it has to say pictorially,” according to Freud. This would confirm the absence of thinking in the unconscious. There is a contradiction between Freud’s theory of the perception-consciousness system, which maintains the existence of unconscious thought, and Freud’s theory of dream work, which, while maintaining references to the existence of unconscious thought, suggests its impossibility.

The linguistic structure of the dream image is seen as “diffuse, clumsy and awkward”; it is clearly missing the organization of conscious reason, while its forms are mimetic of it. If the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, in Lacanian terms, it is only so in so far as it is a mimesis of the discourse of the Other. As Freud said, dreams have “no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts” (p. 347), or for representing logical relations between conscious thoughts, the relations created by syntactical rules. Dream images are compared to the visual arts in their incapacity to incorporate to any significant degree the syntactical structures of language. The desire on the part of the visual arts, in particular architecture, to engage as much as possible the syntactical structures of language, reflects the desire on the part of the arts to interweave the imaginary and the symbolic, in Lacanian terms, in the complete constitution of the subject. Such a dialectical synthesis brings to mind Hegel’s absolute (the complete constitution of the subject) as the synthesis of the subjective (imaginary) and objective (symbolic). In Freudian dream analysis, dreams remain a function of the imaginary rather than the symbolic, in the projection of the ego in a pre-linguistic identification.

Thinking does not occur in the dreams themselves either, according to Freud; any thought processes which might be perceived in memories of dreams are only a mimicking of thought processes which occur in the dream thoughts, which are themselves a mimicking of conscious thought processes. Dreams are thus “thrice removed from reality” as the visual arts are for Plato, forms which are copies of sensible forms which are copies of intelligible forms. “If we go into the interpretation of dreams such as these, we find that the whole of this is part of the material of the dream-thoughts and is not a representation of intellectual work performed during the dream itself,” According to Freud. Thus “what is reproduced by the ostensible thinking in the

dream is the subject-matter of the dream-thoughts and not the mutual relations between them, the assertion of which constitutes thinking” (pp. 347–348). Dream images constitute a kind of façade and a form of deception; they are as the luminous embroidered veil of Plato in the *Republic* hanging between the finite and the infinite, between the images which are mnemonic residues of perceived images, and the thoughts which, if they exist in the unconscious, are themselves mnemonic residues of auditory forms.

The memory of the dream image enacts the same dialectic as is found in metaphysics in conscious thought, the disjunction between that which is perceived and that which is conceived, which is at the core of the dialectic of the imaginary and the symbolic of Lacan. Any thought activity represented in dreams is represented as having already been completed, according to Freud, so thought activity, whether conscious or unconscious, is crystallized into a structure in the dream, made abstract, and made synchronic. Dreams can in that way be seen as another product of the death instinct, the desire to return to that more primordial form of conscious reason, which is defined as mimesis. The death instinct is also responsible for abstraction, according to Wilhelm Worringer, which in thought process would be the transposition of the particular perception to the universal idea, the sensible to the intelligible.

A contradiction in a dream for Freud cannot correspond to a contradiction in a conceptual sequence which is a product of the dream analysis. The logic of the dream is independent of conscious logic. There is an approximation of a conceptual contradiction, though, to the extent that mimesis would allow given its limitations. Any correspondence between conceptual structures would only be an indirect one. Different dreams vary in the clarity of their correspondence with conceptual structures; some seem to correspond fairly clearly, which can easily be a deception, and others make no sense at all. Different dreams would appear to contain varying degrees of the symbolic, the latent content or dream thoughts, in relation to the imaginary, the manifest content or dream images, as they are interwoven. Chronological sequences occur in dreams as imitations of chronological sequences in conceptual thought; they have no logic of their own, and any correspondence with conceptual chronological sequences is an accident.

Diachronic sequences, as they are understood in conscious reason, may as a result be compressed into synchronic events or images in dreams, or they may be fragmented, or reversed, in a logic which might correspond to the dream image in relation to the symbolic, or the discourse of the Other, in the interaction of the ego of the subject, the imaginary, and the symbolic

structure in which it is participating, but not to conscious reason. In other words, because conscious reason is itself a function of the unconscious, the symbolic order, the discourse of the Other, in Lacanian terms, it is not in control of the structure of the dream, which is also a function of the Other. Any logic which can be found in correspondence between conscious reason and the dream is the logic of the Other, the linguistic matrix in which perception participates, and thus the mnemonic residues in dreams, in the symbolic. Freud points to the synchronic representation of diachronic sequences in painting, in the *Parnassus* and the *School of Athens* of Raffaello Sanzio, for example, as evidence of the same process in conscious representation, which is a form of abstraction arising from the death instinct, a product of conscious reason, in a linguistic structure, in its ordering of that which is perceived, in the primacy of the symbolic to the imaginary, the unconscious to conscious thought.

Though the conceptual correspondence is arbitrary, the structuring of dream images as described by Freud corresponds fairly closely to linguistic structures, from which Lacan concludes that the unconscious is structured like a language, and it is safe to conclude that the unconscious is nothing other than the mimesis of language. Freud points out that the rules of collocation in dream images correspond to the rules of collocation in language. Dream images are distinct from one another in the same way that words are distinct from one another in a sentence, and the logic behind the combination is usually evident, a structural logic, as one that corresponds to the logic behind word combinations in sentences. Dreams seem to obey a grammatical and syntactical structure, regardless of whether a sense can be derived from them which corresponds to conscious reason. In that way dream images can be seen as pictorial equivalents of signifiers; they operate independently of the dream thoughts that they are supposedly attached to, and any signification which they produce is a product of their combinations as systems of differences in a syntax, as in structural linguistics. Freud points out that dreams have no intention of communicating anything, so it is most likely that they produce no signification. Such communication would require a recognizable syntactical structure that corresponds to conscious logic, which does not exist in dreams, despite the periodic correspondences and similarities which are reproduced in imitation of relations in logic.

One example of the inability of dreams to correspond to conscious reasoning, in addition to the lack of distinction between the synchronic and diachronic, is the simultaneity of contraries and contradictions. Opposite forms

are combined into a single form, or appear as the same form, or a form might be replaced by its opposite, or represented by its opposite. There is no distinction between positive and negative, no sign of any conclusion that might be drawn from conceptual thought as given in the syntactical structure of language. Freud points out that the same quality can be found in certain words in archaic languages. In Latin, for example, *altus* means both high and deep, and *sacer* means both sacred and accursed. In certain words in ancient Egyptian language, “the order of the sounds in a word can be reversed, while keeping the same meaning,” as described in the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*.<sup>7</sup> Archaic languages “betray vagueness in a variety of ways which we would not tolerate in our writing today” (p. 285). Current languages vary widely in their ambiguity. The Italian language, for example, has many fewer words available to it than the English language; as a result, words in the Italian language often have more than one meaning, and the language requires more words in a sentence to express the same idea than would be expressed in English.

The same kind of reversals occur in dream images; the conceptual structure of the order has no importance which is readily discernible by conscious reasoning. Dreams display the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coincidence of opposites, that was seen as a sign of the One in *nous*, or the intellectual, in Neoplatonism. Plotinus has been called a philosopher of the unconscious because, although there was no concept of the unconscious in the third century, what we now call the unconscious was clearly the inspiration for an interior knowledge or thought process that was distinguished from an exterior thought process, as manifest in the differentiation of particulars in logic. The same distinction is made by Hegel, in the difference between the universal and particular, subjective spirit and objective spirit. The *coincidentia oppositorum* is seen as the dialectic of becoming in reason, in the development from the particular to the universal, which is pre-existent in it.

The intellectual of Plotinus, *nous poietikos*, is the source of the universal, as a manifestation of the One, which is concept in reason, and which creates the dialectic in reason, which is the unfolding of the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the differentiations which constitute logic and discursive reason, *nous pathetikos*. The intellectual is a higher form of reason than logic, and its attributes correspond to dream images. There was an idea in Plotinus, to whom Lacan refers on a few occasions, that there was a different form of reason operating without connection to sense perception. The intellectual, engaging in intelligibles, was described as existing independently of the sensible

world, and relying on a different kind of perception, a perception based on archetypes rather than sensible forms, the *species apprehensibilis* rather than the *species sensibilis*. The archetypal forms of intelligible vision, which probably correspond to the mnemic residues of forms in perception, were seen to be prior to forms in the sensible world, because they were closer to the intelligible forms, the universals, from which the sensible forms, the particulars, are derived. Perception of the sensible world is seen as being constructed by reason, and as being a deception in relation to the totality of thought, by both Plotinus and Lacan. *Nous pathetikos* and *nous poietikos* in Plotinus correspond to conscious and unconscious in Lacan. The principal difference is that for Lacan, conscious reason itself is seen as a deception, rather than just a shortcoming, which is responsible for the deception of perception., and the illusion of consciousness.

Representation in dreams, according to Freud, is often facilitated by replacement, as in a *coincidentia oppositorum*, or a condensation. As he describes, “When a common element between two persons is represented in a dream, it is usually a hint for us to look for another, concealed common element whose representation has been made impossible by the censorship. A displacement in regard to the common element has been made in order, as it were, to facilitate its representation” (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 357). As Lacan has shown, this is precisely the mechanism of metaphor, in the eliding of the first signified, which produces the anchoring point, the point at which signification is produced and the bar between the signifier and signified is crossed, and the point at which the unconscious is made present as an absence. This is one of many examples in Freud’s dream interpretation which points to the linguistic structuring of dream images.

The two principal mechanisms of the formation of dream images in *The Interpretation of Dreams* are displacement and condensation. Displacement is responsible for the fact that dream images do not correspond to conscious reason, and causes the dream to be seen as nothing more than a distortion, or perversion, of reason, a deceptive façade. Lacan has shown that displacement is a primary mechanism of both metaphor and metonymy in language, and that it results in a figurative or poetic signification or effect in language which goes beyond its literal function and introduces the unconscious, as in the case of metaphor, a distorted signification, and in the case of the metonym, displacement results in pure nonsense. In such a mechanism the dream can be seen as a form of tropic or figural language whose logical sense is removed from rational discourse.

The other principal mechanism in dream formation is condensation, which involves the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the representation of two contrary ideas by the same structure, as well as the diachronic combined into the synchronic, and “collective and composite figures.” Condensation is the most active mechanism in dream formation, as “in dreams fresh composite forms are being perpetually constructed in an inexhaustible variety,” as described by Freud in *On Dreams*.<sup>8</sup> In condensation the dream image is over-determined by material in the dream thoughts, or in the mnemonic residue of visual or auditory perception, as it were. A single dream image may be the combination of several pictorial or linguistic forms which have no apparent relation to each other, as in the play of difference in signification, in the *différance* of Jacques Derrida. Condensation is the mechanism of synecdoche in tropic language. In synecdoche a single word serves as a substitute for several words, or a complex idea; condensation is thus another form of displacement, and can be seen as a mechanism of metaphor and metonymy as well. The condensation and displacement which Freud observes as characteristics of the dream image lend to the theory that the dream is a pictorial language, that the unconscious is structured like a language.

Though there is a direct correspondence between the dream thought and the dream image for Freud, the construction of the dream entails a more complex relationship between the thought (mnemonic residue) and the image. As is seen in condensation and displacement, in *On Dreams*, “just as connections lead from each element of the dream to several dream thoughts, so as a rule a single dream thought is represented by more than one dream element; the threads of association do not simply converge from the dream thoughts to the dream content, they cross and interweave with each other many times over in the course of their journey” (p. 32), not motivated by any rational desire to communicate anything.

A similar concept can be seen in the “floating kingdoms” of Ferdinand de Saussure, the realm of signifieds (conceptual networks of signifiers) in relation to the realm of signifiers (words), where, while there is a direct physical relationship between the signifier and the signified, they are joined between the two realms in a complex network of relationships, and it is particular occurrences within that network of relationships which engenders signification. In the *Course in General Linguistics* of Saussure, a “linguistic system is a series of differences of sound combined with a series of differences of ideas; but the pairing of a certain number of acoustical signs with as many cuts made from the mass of thought engenders a system of values; and this sys-

tem serves as the effective link between the phonic and psychological elements within each sign” (p. 120). The relations between the dream thoughts and the dream images can be seen as a series of differences combined with a series of differences in which the pairing (incidental or otherwise) of a particular image with a particular concept might be taken as a linguistic sign, which contains a signifier and a signified. Or they can just be seen as coincidences of systems of differences.

The displacement which occurs in dreams is responsible for distorting, more than anything else, the “psychical intensity” of the thoughts or mnemonic residues which correspond to the dreams, according to Freud. The psychic intensity is described in *On Dreams* as the significance or “affective potentiality” (p. 34) of the thought or perceptual trace; the system of differences between the traces is a system of intensities as much as a system of signifiers, or more, because of the nature of the relation between the mnemonic residue and perception; some images or words are perceived at a different level of intensity than others, more clearly or more loudly, etc., and it stands to reason that the variations in intensities would be translated in the composition of the dream images, and that those variations would be illegible in relation to any conceptual structure. As Freud said, “In the course of this process...the psychical intensity, significance or affective potentiality of the thoughts is, as we further find, transformed into sensory vividness.”

As a result of the complex network of psychical relationships which produce the dream images, and the mechanisms of condensation and displacement, dreams are composed of “disconnected fragments of visual images, speeches and even bits of unmodified thoughts,” which “stand in the most manifold logical relations to one another” which are seen for example as “foreground and background, conditions, digressions and illustrations, chains of evidence and counterarguments” (p. 40). The network of logical relations which contribute to the composition of dream images is far too complex to be unraveled in dream analysis. Displacement, condensation, fragmentation, substitution and the *coincidentia oppositorum* are products of the complex network of logical relations, or the mnemonic residues of such, in dream thoughts, which is too complex to correspond to any logical structure. In the process of the dream formation “the logical links which have hitherto held the psychical material together are lost” (p. 41). It is the task of analysis to restore the logical connections which the dream work has destroyed, as in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, dreams are seen as the “royal road to a knowledge of the unconscious activities of the mind” (p. 647), an access to



psychical mechanisms which psychoanalysis seeks to understand. Lacanian psychoanalysis furthers this quest in the analysis of the linguistic mechanisms of which dreams are a product.

In that the dream is always a function of the subject, the unconscious of the subject, that the dream is always in relation to the subject, the dream must be seen as a function of the symbolic, as a linguistic mechanism. Although the dream has no intention of communicating anything, it is nevertheless a product of the relation of the subject to itself, a product of the insertion of the subject into the symbolic, and the intersection of the symbolic and imaginary self-definitions of the subject. To that degree, the dream functions as a signifying process as does language. It is only a self-referential language, but it is constructed as a mimesis of interpersonal language. The dream is a representation of the subject to itself as a construct of the symbolic, as the unconscious is the discourse of the Other. The dream is the Other speaking to the subject. In *On Dreams*, the dream “behaves toward the dream content lying before it just as our normal psychical activity behaves in general toward any perceptual content that may be presented to it. It understands that content on the basis of certain anticipatory ideas, and arranges it, even at the moment of perceiving it, on the presupposition of its being intelligible...” (p. 49). This is exactly the way that Lacan describes signification at the moment of the entry of the subject into the signifying chain.

In the signifying chain of Lacan, the point at which the elided subject is identified, as in the metaphor, is the point at which the relation between the elided subject and “ideal ego,” the imaginary ego, is intersected by the vector of enunciation in the L-schema, which occurs only retroactively in the signifying chain, in anticipation of signification, as the subject in the dream anticipates signification in perception. The ideal ego is the idealized self in the imaginary, the perfection to which the ego strives, following the mirror stage. The point in the signifying chain is the anchoring point, the *point de capiton*, and as described by Lacan in *Écrits*, “the diachronic function of this anchoring point is to be found in the sentence, even if the sentence completes its signification only with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction of the others, and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect” (p. 303). Dream construction, like the signifying chain in language, must be supported by a self-conception of the subject as ideal ego, but the conception of the subject can never be realized; it is always an expectation, and the subject can only identify itself after the fact of enunciation. This is borne out by the fact that, though the dream only functions in relation to

the subject, the subject is never present in the dream. In the dream, as in language, “this is a retroversion effect by which the subject becomes at each stage what he was before and announces himself—he will have been—only in the future perfect tense” (p. 306).

In the anticipation of the dream content by the dream, according to Freud in *On Dreams*, the dream “runs a risk of falsifying it, and in fact, if it cannot bring it into line with anything familiar, is a prey to the strangest misunderstandings. As is well known, we are incapable of seeing a series of unfamiliar signs or of hearing a succession of unknown words, without at once falsifying the perception from considerations of intelligibility, on the basis of something already known to us” (p. 49). We construct the world that we perceive in order to make it intelligible to us, in order that it conform to our a priori intuitions. For Lacan, this would make it impossible for the subject to recognize itself in the dream, and it would be at this point that “the ambiguity of a failure to recognize that is essential to knowing myself is introduced. For, in this ‘rear view’, all that the subject can be certain of is the anticipated image coming to meet him,” as described by Lacan in *Écrits* (p. 306), which is absent in the dream. The anticipated image is the imaginary vector between the elided subject and the ideal ego, which announces the absence of the subject in language, sensible form becoming intelligible form in perception, in crossing the bar between signifier and signified, but bars the subject from its own absence (the unconscious), in not being able to cross the bar at the same time, as in metaphor. In this way the unconscious is present in the dream as well. The ideal ego is the perfection of the self in the imaginary order, as opposed to the “ego ideal,” the perfection of the self in the symbolic order, in the unconscious.

In terms of revealing both conscious and unconscious, imaginary and symbolic, mechanisms in the subject for Freud, “a dream that resembles a disordered heap of disconnected fragments is just as valuable as one that has been beautifully polished and provided with a surface” (*On Dreams*, p. 49), if not more so, given the deception of conscious reason. A dream is nothing other than condensation and displacement, that is, the mechanisms of language enacted to replay mnemonic residues of visual and auditory perceptions, sensible forms, for no communicative purposes. In the condensation and displacement, words and images are taken out of the context in which they are perceived, as submitted to the mechanisms of conscious thought, and they are freely recombined and substituted in the mimetic process. As opposed to waking thought, the nature of which is to “establish order in material of that

kind, to set up relations in it and to make it conform to our expectations of an intelligible whole" (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 537), dreams are not subject to the orderings of conscious thought, and thus produce both chronological and pictorial hybridizations, as well as displacements and distortions of what is perceived according to conscious mechanisms. In that way dreams are perceptions minus conscious thought, while the mechanism of dreams, the underlying linguistic structure, is the same. In this way the dream is the discourse of the Other, and the unconscious is structured like a language. The mechanisms of language are not necessarily conscious mechanisms, and in that way it is the subject which is the product of language, rather than language which is a product of the subject. The language of which the subject is a product is the language of the Other, which is the unconscious.

When memories of dreams are analyzed, they are submitted to conscious reason, and are thus distorted and misunderstood. The language of the Other is not completely accessible to conscious thought. It is not possible for conscious reason to completely understand the matrix of interpersonal relations which constitutes the Other. In the Hegelian dialectic between subjective and objective spirit, objective spirit, collective discourse, is seen as a manifestation of subjective spirit. The individual subject wills itself into the Other in order to define itself, through reason. Subjective spirit is defined by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* as individual self-consciousness (767) which becomes objective spirit through "collective picture-thinking," collective reason and perception, which Lacan would define as the Other.

Hegel saw perception as a function of subjective spirit, desire and self-consciousness. In *Reason in History*, ego was defined by Hegel as the desire of the subjective spirit to become objective spirit. "This self-knowing subjectivity projects itself into all objectivity. This constitutes the Ego's certainty of its own existence. Inasmuch as this subjectivity has no other content, it must be called the rational desire....this is the sphere of its phenomenality. It wills itself in its particularity. If it succeeds in thus realizing its finiteness, it doubles itself (its potential finiteness becomes actual finiteness)." <sup>9</sup> The externalization of subjective spirit as other and as objective particularity, and the self-consciousness of the subjective as other in language, is picture-thinking (*Vorstellung*), or perception, as given by reason in signification. The externalization is an alteration of the content of subjectivity through misunderstanding, the impossibility of knowing the subjective in the objective as the Other. Subjective spirit becomes objective spirit when mind comes to know itself as its own other, double of itself. Thus it is impossible for reason

to identify itself in the Other, though it is given by the Other, as it is impossible to recognize itself in the dream or in the unconscious.

For Freud, then, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “there is no doubt...that it is our normal thinking that is the psychical agency which approaches the content of dreams with a demand that it must be intelligible, which subjects it to a first interpretation and which consequently produces a complete misunderstanding of it” (p. 538). The dream itself has no desire to be intelligible. The production of dream thoughts must then be seen as external to the dream, as that which conscious reason projects onto the dream, through the desire of subjective spirit becoming objective spirit, and the desire of the subject to insert itself into the Other, as a thinking subject. The ego of the subjective spirit is the ego of the imaginary, the self-imposition of the subject into the dream prior to its analysis. “However many interesting and puzzling questions the dream-thoughts may involve, such questions have, after all, no special relations to dreams and do not call for treatment among the problem of dreams” (p. 544), as Freud explained. The dream thoughts are not only external to the dream, but they have no particular relationship with it. The symbolic is external to the imaginary, as a result of the will of subjective spirit toward objective spirit, and its doubling of itself in reason as a result, its self-alienation and misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the process of which it is a result, that is, that it is a product of the Other.

Though there is not a direct relationship between dream content and the dream thought which is the intervention of conscious reason, there is a correspondence in dreams between the image in the imaginary and the word in the symbolic, a correspondence which is given by the underlying syntactical structure of the dream, the presence of the unconscious. Freud gives as an example of correspondences between images and linguistic structures the frequent occurrence of houses and parts of houses in dreams. The house is seen in dream interpretation to be a symbol of the body, as a fortress might be a symbol of the ego. But Freud also observed the correspondence between the occurrence of the house in the dream and the use of the house in tropic language, in metaphorical and metonymical figures of speech in the German language. In the *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, “But the same symbolism is found in our linguistic usage—when we greet an acquaintance familiarly as an ‘*altes Haus*’ [‘old house’], when we speak of giving someone ‘*eins aufs Dach!*’ [a knock on the head, literally, ‘one on the roof’], or when we say of someone else that ‘he’s not quite right in the upper storey’.

In anatomy the orifices of the body are in so many words termed ‘*Leibesporten*’ [literally, ‘portals of the body’]” (p. 196).

It is clear that the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy, crucial in the access to the unconscious for Lacan, are in operation visually in dreams, as transpositions from mnemonic residues of auditory perceptions to visual images. Certainly the obverse would be the case as well, that relationships between the mnemonic residues of visual images are transposed into auditory images in dreams, which gives an indication of the complexity of the underlying linguistic matrix which connects dreams with conscious thought, and which connects the unconscious with the conscious, and which establishes the importance of the unconscious in the definition of the subject as a product of the Other, the underlying linguistic matrix of the unconscious.

For Freud the linguistic structures themselves must be subject to condensation, displacement and distortion, which makes their presence even more obscure. Condensation occurs in language use in slips of the tongue, for example, in which neologisms are created which display an unintentional repression, which reveals the presence of the unconscious in language. An example is “the young man who offered to ‘*begleitdigen*’ [‘*begleiten* (accompany)’ + ‘*beleidigen* (insult)’] a lady” (*Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, p. 212). The same mechanisms occur in dream images, as they are transposed from mnemonic residues of auditory perceptions, and they are combined and interwoven with straightforward transpositions of linguistic structures, rendering them virtually impossible to translate. In addition, “a manifest element may correspond simultaneously to several latent ones, and, contrariwise, a latent element may play a part in several manifest ones—there is, as it were, a criss-cross relationship” (p. 213). As a result an attempted translation of a dream can never be literal nor follow a fixed set of rules according to conscious reason.

The signifying chain in language, in the production of metaphor and metonymy in tropic or figural language, for example, depends on an unbroken rational sequence in order to arrive at the *point de capiton*, the point of signification in Lacan’s scheme, at which the subject enters into the sequence as absence. Even in neologisms, jokes, and metonyms which make no literal sense, rational discourse is maintained. The same is not true for the language of dreams, but at the same time dreams cannot be seen as irrational babble. In displacement in language, in metonymy for example, which entails the production of nonsense, an allusion is required for the metonym to make sense as nonsense. “The foot of a hill” makes no sense literally, but it makes

sense in its nonsense because there is a prior relationship between the foot and the hill (the hill can be seen as a body). “In waking thought the allusion must be easily intelligible, and the substitute must be related in its subject-matter to the genuine thing it stands for” (p. 214). The “precondition of intelligibility,” and the precondition of association, must always be present for language to function. The same is not true in dreams. There is no precondition of intelligibility, because nothing is being communicated, and there is no precondition of association between images, because the mnemonic residues have been disassociated and taken out of context from the structure in which they were perceived. The linguistic structure of the dream is radically distorted from the linguistic structure of conscious thought, which makes understanding the dream in relation to conscious thought even more difficult.

Freud’s dream analysis, and psychoanalysis in general, establishes the importance of the relation between the unconscious and conscious thought, and in fact establishes the primacy of unconscious processes in relation to conscious thought, processes which Lacan translates as the Other, the symbolic structure of language. For Freud, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, “it is essential to abandon the overvaluation of the property of being conscious, before it becomes possible to form any correct view of the origin of what is mental...the unconscious is the larger sphere, which includes within it the smaller sphere of the conscious.”<sup>10</sup> Freud cannot avoid though, as has been seen, an analysis of the unconscious in the terms of conscious thought. This is given by the supposition that there is an unconscious thought that has similarities with conscious thought; it is primarily the existence of an unconscious thought that is brought into question by Lacan, in the redefinition of the unconscious as the discourse of the Other and as that which is structured like a language, but which, as Freud has shown, does not function like a language. Dream images might correspond to linguistic structures, but dreams are not the unconscious, just the royal road to it.

The unconscious was seen by Freud as both constituted by repression, as a linguistic mechanism, and an agent of that repression, and of *méconnaissance* in conscious thought. The unconscious is a non-originary origin of repression, as the Other is a non-originary origin of *méconnaissance* for Lacan, and the ego in subjective spirit is a non-originary origin of the self-alienation of reason in objective spirit. The ego, which in all three ideologies can be defined as thought itself, is the non-originary origin of psychoanalysis, and the better part of thought is inaccessible to itself. The structure of the Freudian unconscious is seen to contain the same internal differences and differentia-

tions as does language in conscious thought, that occur in a non-originary origin; in other words, the unconscious can be defined by the quality of the *différance* of Jacques Derrida, the play of differences between signifiers which defers the possibility of meaning, connections between signifiers and signifieds, in the same way that it can be defined by the quality of signification in language, and thus, the *signifiance* of Lacan, in the mechanisms of conscious discourse. The unconscious is equally devoid of the presence of the subject as conscious discourse, as seen in dream construction and the mechanisms of language, and is thus the discourse of the Other.

The Freudian unconscious represents for Derrida in *Writing and Difference* the “irreducibility of the ‘effect of deferral’ . . . ,”<sup>11</sup> the absence of presence. The conscious text, the interpretation of the dream, for example, cannot be a transcription, “because there is no text present elsewhere as an unconscious one to be transposed or transported” (p. 211), Derrida explained. If the unconscious is the discourse of the Other, which is the source of the subject, then the Other cannot be known to the subject; the subject cannot know its origin, nor the basis of its thought. There is no discourse in the unconscious, no communication, nor in dreams, which can be translated into a conscious discourse. In *Writing and Difference*, “There is no unconscious truth to be rediscovered by virtue of having been written elsewhere. There is no text written and present elsewhere which would then be subjected, without being changed in the process, to an operation and a temporalization (the latter belonging to consciousness if we follow Freud literally) which would be external to it, floating on its surface.” The dream could not be a hieroglyph, as Freud suggested in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (p. 377) for example, because the signs do not contain a discourse. The unconscious does not exist, except as a presence of absence, an absence within presence or conscious thought. Thus for Derrida “the unconscious text is already a weave of pure traces, differences in which meaning and force are united—a text nowhere present, consisting of archives which are *always already* transcriptions” (*Writing and Difference*, p. 211).

This can be seen, as has been shown, in the structure of dreams: a complex matrix of mnemonic residues, structured like a language, but with no intention of communication, and free of the restrictions of language in conscious discourse. As the primary mechanisms of dream construction are condensation and displacement, corresponding to the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy in the anticipation of the subject in the signifying chain, “signified presence” in both conscious and unconscious thought, as described

by Derrida, “is always reconstituted by deferral, *nachträglich*, belatedly, *supplementarily*: for the *nachträglich* also means *supplementary*. The call of the supplement is primary, here, and it hollows out that which will be reconstituted by deferral as the present. The supplement, which seems to be added as a plenitude to a plenitude, is equally that which compensates for a lack (*qui supplée*)” (pp. 211–212). The supplement is tropic language—metaphor, metonym, synecdoche—in the linguistics of Lacan, as that which reveals the unconscious, the lack which is being supplemented, the absence which is being made present. The signifier represents the subject to another signifier, and desire is instituted in the signifying chain, as a function of the supplement, a function of the lack in being. For Hegel, desire is the will of subjective spirit toward objective spirit, which is precisely the supplement, conscious discourse which is the product of the objectification of spirit in reason, which is the objectification of a non-originary origin, an absence, which necessitates the self-alienation of reason, which is confirmed by the structuring of the unconscious.

The mnemonic residues of perception which constitute the content of dreams, and which can be seen as revealing the presence of the unconscious in conscious thought, can be compared to the “trace” which Derrida described as a component of language in *différance*. In *Positions*, *différance* is defined as the systematic play of traces of differences and of the spacing by which signifiers relate to one another. Spacing is the production of “intervals without which the ‘full’ terms could not signify, could not function.”<sup>12</sup> *Différance* is thus the mechanism of the production of differences in signification in the absence of a direct relationship between signifier and signified, in the linguistic structure introduced by Saussure.

In *différance*, according to Derrida, “the play of differences involves syntheses and referrals that prevent there from being at any moment or in any way a simple element that is present in and of itself and refers only to itself.” Thus, whether “in written or in spoken discourse, no element can function as a sign without relating to another element which itself is not simply present. This linkage means that each ‘element’—phoneme or grapheme—is constituted with reference to the trace in it of the other elements of the sequence or system” (*Positions*, p. 26). The linkage “is the *text*, which is produced only through the transformation of another text. Nothing, either in the elements or in the system, is anywhere simply present or absent. There are only, everywhere, differences and traces of traces.” The trace is as the anchoring point of Lacan, the *archê* or point of non-originary origin in signification at which



signification is produced retroactively in relation to the subject, and that point is constituted by the absences which have been introduced by presences in the signifying chain.

Mnemic residues of perception are already traces, presences of absences which are constituted in the dream. If the dream can be compared to a hieroglyph, then the pictographic script of the hieroglyph can only be seen as a trace, a mark which does not correspond to conscious discourse, but which suggests the presence of conscious discourse, as mnemic residues suggest the presence of auditory and visual perceptions, in memories of dreams and hallucinations. The psyche is thus seen by Freud as a “space of writing,” but it is a writing which is always exterior and posterior to the spoken word, the auditory perception. Perception is already an inscription, and there is a gap, a play of differences, between what is perceived and what is constructed in the mind through the intersection of perception and reason, or the imaginary and symbolic, which manifests itself as the dream. The gap between what is perceived and what is constructed in the mind is the gap between the *species sensibilis* and the *species apprehensibilis* in philosophy of intellect, or the gap between the sensible object and the a priori intuition of it in transcendental idealism. The unconscious is structured like a language according to Lacan, and the language is a play of differences and traces, as in conscious discourse. The trace in both conscious and unconscious discourse is given by the dialectic of the imaginary and symbolic, or subjective and objective spirit, the absence contained in the identification between the image and the word, sensible form and intelligible form, especially as it contributes to the definition of the subject, and the role of the ego in expressive language.

As Lacan explained, in the essay “Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever,” from the volume *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man*, “in a universe of discourse nothing contains everything, and here you find again the gap that constitutes the subject. The subject is the introduction of a loss in reality, yet nothing can introduce that, since by status reality is as full as possible.”<sup>13</sup> Language, as a necessarily all-inclusive system of signification, cannot contain what is other to itself. As there is a gap between what is perceived and what is represented in language, the sensible and intelligible, a gap which is represented by the absence of the subject in language, that gap is manifested by the trace in *différance*, and the anchoring point in *signifiance*, as an archaic or primordial gap, a *chôra*, the origin of which exceeds the possibility of language, as an enclosed system, to incorporate.

For Lacan, “when the subject takes the place of the lack,” in the symbolic order, “a loss is introduced in the word,” the *point de capiton*, or the trace, “and this is the definition of the subject” (p. 193). Language is other to the subject, Lacan says, “what I call the otherness, of the sphere of language” (pp. 193–194); if language, the chain of signification, is otherness, then the subject is always a “fading” beneath the chain of signifiers. The signifier does not represent anything to anybody, as opposed to a sign or symbol; the signifier only represents the subject to another signifier, the subject which is absent. Desire is the search of the subject to rediscover itself in language, which is impossible. Desire is enacted by the symbolic order in language, in the formation of conscious reason, in the absence of the imaginary ideal ego, that part of itself which it seeks to rediscover. “The question of desire is that the fading subject yearns to find itself again by means of some sort of encounter with this miraculous thing defined by the phantasm” (p. 194), the sensible form in perception, the imaginary ego ideal.

In his essay “The Unconscious” in 1915, Freud defined metapsychology as the description of a mental process. Freud introduced two metapsychologies. The first, described as topographic, defined mental processes in a triadic landscape of unconscious, preconscious, and conscious. The second, described as structural, defined mental processes in a triadic architecture of *das Es* or the It, *das Ich* or the I, and *das Uber-Ich*, or the over-I. English translators gave these categories the names id, ego and super-ego. The It is the other, what is alien in the psyche. The Freudian unconscious should not be seen as “merely the seat of instincts” in the words of Jacques Lacan, Freud’s most important follower, in *Écrits* (p.147). Freud considered *The Interpretation of Dreams*, published in 1900, to be his most important contribution to psychoanalysis. Freud rejected philosophy as a basis for understanding the human mind, and insisted that psychoanalysis is a science. The fact is that psychoanalysis is based on metapsychology, which is a metaphysical philosophy.

One element of Freud’s description of the transition from the unconscious to conscious is not clear, and is the source of much controversy. In *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis*, published in 1940, Freud summarized his theory: “The process of something becoming conscious is above all linked with the perceptions which our sense organs receive from the external world....But there is an added complication through which internal processes in the ego may also acquire the quality of consciousness. This is the work of the function of speech...” (pp. 34–35). In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, once “a dream has become a perception, it is in a position to excite consciousness” (p.

614), but in *The Ego and the Id* in 1923, “How does a thing become conscious?...Through being connected with the word presentations corresponding to it” (p. 12).<sup>14</sup> And “The part played by word-presentations now becomes perfectly clear. By their interposition internal thought-processes are made into perceptions” (p. 16). So only a thought which begins as a mnemic residue of perception can resurface to consciousness from the preconscious through language, and any thought arising from the unconscious must be transformed into an external perception, through the memory-trace, in order to become conscious.

So which is it? Do unconscious thoughts become conscious through language, or through perception? Lacan adopted the position in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, identifying the imaginary (perception and picture thinking) with conscious thought. Lacan tried to solve the contradiction in his *Seminar VII (The Ethics of Psychoanalysis)* by suggesting that Freud used the word *Sache* rather than *Ding* for thing-presentation because *Sache* connotes a thing as an *eidos* while *Ding* connotes a thing as a *morphe*, thus the *Sachvorstellung*, the visual residue, is already constructed by language, and is not outside of perception.<sup>15</sup> The problem comes down to the distinction between *eidos* and *morphe*, at the core of Platonic and Idealist philosophy. In *Seminar XI (The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis)*, Lacan argued that psychoanalysis is opposed to any form of philosophical idealism, because there is no true subject,<sup>16</sup> but it would have served both Freud and Lacan well to read Plotinus in particular. Lacan did refer to Plotinus at the end of his career, in reference to the idea of the One. In the *Enneads* of Plotinus, the word and the image are intertwined in a dialectical relationship in both conscious and unconscious thought. Lacan tends to identify word (the symbolic order) with unconscious thought and image (the imaginary order) with conscious thought exclusively, which is overly simplistic.

In the *Enneads*, mental images are not entirely dependent on sensible forms, because mental images play a role in the determination of sensible forms to begin with, and the result is not just the sensible form imprinted in the mind’s eye, but a combination of the sensible form and the intelligible form. Impressions are received by discursive reason from sense perception, but discursive reason can only respond to them with the help of memory. Memory serves the image-making faculty to preserve images and translate them into words, so that the images which are a product of sense perception can play a role as the vocabulary elements of thinking activity in discursive reason. The intellectual act in mind is only then apprehended when it is

brought into the image-making faculty of mind through the *logos* or linguistic articulation. Judgment in discursive reason is based on the perception of the *eidos* of the sensible object, as it is subjected to the mechanisms of combination and division in apperception, which are the same mechanisms which Freud attributed to the image-making faculty of unconscious thought in the formation of dream images from dream thoughts, what he called condensation and displacement. The judgment in discursive reason for Plotinus is also based on the perception of the image connected to thoughts from the intellectual or noetic thought, as the objects of perception are processed through the unconscious mechanisms of imagination and memory which make the perception possible in the first place, then translate the objects of perception into a totality, even through the combinations and divisions.

In Plotinus the dialectical process involves the imprint of the sense object, sensible form or *morphe* in perception, and the imprint of the idea of the object, intelligible form or *eidos* in the imagination or image-making faculty, then the memory or recollection of past thoughts and perceptions in relation to the present thought, then the transformation of the image, both sensible and intelligible, into the word in language, both the spoken word, *logos prophorikos*, and the word prior to speech in Intellect, the *logos endiathetos*, and then the fitting together of sensible image, intelligible image, recollected sensible image, recollected intelligible image, sensible word and intelligible word, in a process which requires the anticipation of the perception of the image or word in relation to the recollection of the intelligible image or word in the intellectual or unconscious thought, as it is perceived as a reflection or imprint in mind.

Following Aristotle, the intellectual act is not possible without an accompanying mental image, according to Plotinus. The power to form the image in the mind's eye is conversely always accompanied by the verbal expression (IV.3.30),<sup>17</sup> or more accurately, the *logos endiathetos*, the word in thought. The intelligible image, and thus the sensible image, is not possible without the linguistic expression of it, and linguistic expression is not possible without the intelligible image. Perception of sensible objects is only possible after the idea of the sensible object is articulated in language in intellection. As Plotinus says, while the "intellectual act is without parts," as it has not been differentiated in discursive reason, and thus in perception, it "has not, so to speak, come out into the open, but remains unobserved within," as unconscious thought.

But “the verbal expression unfolds its content and brings it out of the intellectual act into the image-making power,” allowing imagination to form the intelligible image which corresponds to the sensible image in memory. In doing so, the linguistic articulation, what Freud would call the *Wortvorstellung*, or word presentation, “shows the intellectual act as if in a mirror,” as a mirror reflection might represent a sensible object, but the linguistic articulation in discursive reason does not contain the intellectual act; the intellectual act remains separated from sense perception and sensible reality. The intellectual act itself is inaccessible, as the unconscious. Conscious thought contains a reflection or representation of unconscious thought, what Freud called the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, but conscious thought does not contain unconscious thought; unconscious thought is inaccessible to conscious thought.

The reflection of the intellectual act in the imagination, in the image-making faculty in language and discursive reason, or conscious thought, might be described as Plotinus’ royal road to the unconscious, as dream images, which are also translations of unconscious intellectual acts (the latent content or dream thought) into images in the imagination (the manifest content or dream image), or the *Sachvorstellungen*, through the medium of articulated thoughts in language, the *Wortvorstellungen*, were Freud’s royal road to the unconscious as described in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Freud described the dream image as being derived, unconsciously, from the dream thought, which is a product of the unarticulated intellectual act during sleep. The dream image is transformed in dream work from the unarticulated idea in unconscious thought, through words in thought which mimic words in conscious thought, and the logos is then translated into the images in the dreams, exactly as it was for Plotinus. The intellectual act, the intelligent activity of the soul, is only apprehended, through a reflection or representation, “when it comes to be in the image-making power” (IV.3.30), as an intelligible form in the imagination produced through perception, language and memory, or as a dream image. For Freud the dream image as formed in the imagination is a *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, a representation of a representation, as it was for Plotinus. According to Plotinus, “the intellectual act is one thing,” inaccessible in the unconscious, but “the apprehension of it another,” through the representation in the mirror reflection of the representation in the logos or word in thought.

In the *De anima* of Aristotle, the soul “never thinks without a mental image” (431a17),<sup>18</sup> but “for the thinking soul images take the place of direct perceptions,” as mind must be separated from body in order to function

properly. Plotinus followed Aristotle in asserting that it is not sensible objects themselves that are perceived, but rather their images or impressions, as he said “soul’s power of sense-perception need not be perception of sense-objects, but rather it must be receptive of the impressions produced by sensation on the living being; these are already intelligible entities” (I.1.7). Perceived forms of sensible objects are not possible except as a consequence of the corresponding intelligible forms which precede them in the process of perception, which is a function of the process of intellection, and a tenet of philosophical idealism which informs psychoanalysis.

According to Aristotle in *De memoria*, memory, like thought, requires an image, and while the image, both sensible and intelligible, is not possible without the form perceived in perception, memory must be a function of perception, as he says “memory, even memory of intelligible things, is not without an image, and the image is an attribute of the common receiving power” (450a13).<sup>19</sup> Memory is not of sensible objects themselves, but of their images: memory is “an active holding of an image as a likeness of that of which it is an image...” (451a18). According to Plotinus, memory of thoughts occurs when the contents of the thoughts are unfolded or articulated, but not verbally, and are presented to the imagination as images, as if they are reflected in a mirror in the mind’s eye. The medium of the unfolding of the thought is the logos. Consciousness in thought comes about when the logos articulates the thought as an image in imagination, as Freud contended. The logos is produced in discursive reason and the image is produced in imagination in its connection to sense perception.

The logoi are the objects of dianoetic thought and discursive reason, the product of divided intellect. In order to signify dianoetically it is necessary to “use the forms of letters which follow the order of words and propositions and imitate sounds and the enunciations of philosophical statements” (*Enneads* V.8.6), as described by Plotinus. The spoken word is an imitation of that in the soul (I.2.3) as the *logos prophorikos* is an imitation of the *logos endiathetos*. The underlying realities of that which is grasped by sense perception are not accessible to sense perception; the underlying realities are only known in the intellectual or the unconscious. The logoi are the products of the “rational formative principle” (III.2.2) flowing from the intellectual. The logos represents a thought and unfolds it and makes it visible to imagination, accompanied by an image, in a combination of the *Wortvorstellung* and the *Sachvorstellung*. The apprehension of the thought by the imagination is responsible for conscious thought, as Freud said; it is connected with the con-

consciousness of perception, although that consciousness is deceptive, as perception is made possible by the underlying realities or intelligibles that form the intelligible world.

Conscious thoughts, according to Plotinus, “by means of sense-perception—which is a kind of intermediary when dealing with sensible things—do appear to work on the level of sense and think about sense objects” (I.4.10). Awareness, or conscious thought, “exists and is produced when intellectual activity is reflexive and when that in the life of the soul which is active in thinking is in a way projected back,” as a representation formed by logos, a *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. The content and activities of intellect or the intellectual are always present, but it is necessary for them to be unfolded by logos and be reflected by imagination in order for them to come into consciousness from unconscious thought. Only the function of imagination, the power to form images, provides conscious thought with a glimpse of the presence and activities of unconscious thought, as in dreams. It is only when the activities of intellect are shared with perception that “conscious awareness takes place” (V.1.2), corresponding to the manifest content in dream work. As, according to Plotinus, “not everything which is in the soul is immediately perceptible, but it reaches us when it enters into perception” (V.1.12), perception involves both sensible perception and the perception of images by imagination. Imagination operates on several different levels for Plotinus: it produces images in sense perception, it synthesizes images in dianoetic thought, and it produces images in correspondence with the articulation through logos or noetic thought, as later summarized by Kant.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud gave the name of imagination to the mechanism of the transposition from dream thoughts to dream images, latent content to manifest content, in the concern for representability in the dream. Dreams appear to be irrational, but it is not the unconscious which is irrational, it is the mechanisms of the imagination in the dream work that transpose dream thoughts into dream images. The mechanisms which are irrational are the image-making faculty or the imagination, exactly as in the thought of Plotinus. As Freud described, “the mental activity which may be described as ‘imagination’” is “liberated from the domination of reason and from any moderating control” (116). Dream imagination “makes use of recent waking memories for its building material,” in mimesis and repetition, and “it erects them into structures bearing not the remotest resemblance to those of waking life.” Dream imagination is “without the power of conceptu-

al speech” and has “no concepts to exercise an attenuating influence,” thus being “obliged to paint what it has to say pictorially.”

Dreams have “no means at their disposal for representing these logical relations between the dream-thoughts” (347), rational unconscious thought, or for representing logical relations between conscious thoughts, the relations created by syntactical rules. Thinking does not occur in the manifest content of the dream. Diachronic sequences, as they are understood in conscious or discursive reason, may be compressed into synchronic events or images, in condensation, or they may be fragmented, or reversed, in displacement. Condensation and displacement, the mechanisms of imagination, are responsible for the fact that dream images do not correspond to conscious reason, and cause the dream to be seen as a distortion of reason, while the dream has no intention of communicating anything.

There are many correspondences between Freudian metapsychology and Plotinian metaphysics. Many of Freud’s ideas seem to be rooted in classical philosophy, although acknowledgement is rarely given. Plotinus is a fruitful source for understanding how the mind works. For Freud, unconscious words become conscious images, and unconscious images become conscious words, but these processes do not happen independently of each other. They are wrapped up in a dialectical process that is better understood by reading Plotinus.



This essay developed and rewritten from sections of *Architecture and Psychoanalysis*, New York: Peter Lang, 2006, without the references to architecture, and with revisions and corrections.

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psycho-Analysis, The Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id, The Standard Edition*, trans. Joan Riviere, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966 [1915]), p. 112.

<sup>5</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arnold Vincent Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

<sup>6</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams, The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon Books, 1965), pp. 311–312.

<sup>7</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, The Standard Edition*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966), p. 221.

<sup>8</sup> Sigmund Freud, *On Dreams, The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton, 1952), p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Reason in History, A General Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Robert Hartman (New York: The Liberal Arts Press, 1953 [1837]), p. 33.

<sup>10</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Volume VI, pp. 612–613, quoted in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), p. 161.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 203.

<sup>12</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. 27, quoted in Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction*, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Of Structure as an Inmixing of an Otherness Prerequisite to Any Subject Whatever,” in Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato, ed., *The Structuralist Controversy: The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), p. 193.

<sup>14</sup> Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id, The Standard Edition*, trans. James Strachey, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1960.

<sup>15</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar VII, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter, New York: W. W. Norton & Co., p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar XI, The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: W. W. Norton, 1977.

<sup>17</sup> Plotinus, *Enneads*, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, The Loeb Classical Library, 1966.

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul (De anima)*, trans. W. S. Hett, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, the Loeb Classical Library, 1964.

<sup>19</sup> Aristotle, *On the Soul and On Memory and Recollection (De memoria)*, trans. J. Sachs, Santa Fe: Green Lion Press, 2001.